

"SLAVE REBELLIONS IN GUYANA"

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The two slave rebellions with which this paper deals are separated by exactly sixty years. The former took place in Berbice and was a sustained effort lasting nearly a year; the latter took place on the East Coast of Demerara and was over in a matter of days.

At first sight therefore it seems pointless to bracket these two insurrections in an attempt to get an exploratory idea of the anatomy of slave revolts in Guyana. But the purpose of this exercise is both to contrast the features of two attempts to change the social system by the slaves, bearing in mind the altered historical circumstances; as well as to search for any underlying principles which may have operated the same in both cases.

Both historians and social scientists have come round to the view that revolutions or other violent attempts at change from below take place when the degree of acceptance which those at the bottom of society accord the system erodes - when the particular "premise of inequality" on which the society functions is no longer accepted by those most unequal. But it has also been observed that the withdrawal of acceptance by those below must be accompanied by a failure of nerve on the part of those above, for an attempt at rebellion or revolution to be anything but abortive. Similarly it is maintained that the crucially effective leadership in these violent attempts to change social system comes from those who have had some measure of privilege or were possessed of some special skill under the old regime. To put the matter more narrowly it is argued that the withdrawal of acceptance on the part of these privileged people makes possible the concentrated attempted to bring the social system down.

It is valuable in the attempt to analyse the two rebellions to keep these general principles in view, less as guides, than as points of reference, the validity of which can be tested as one brings the circumstances of the revolts under review.

In Jamaica Orlando Paterson in his book "The Sociology of Slavery" found that most of the frequent revolts in the 18th century was spearheaded by African slaves, and particularly those of the Akan tribal grouping. It seems that there the degree of acceptance of the slave system was lowest among the Akans; low among the African slaves generally; and highest among the Creole born slaves. On the evidence available at the moment the same seems to have been true of

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Berbice. And in Berbice like Jamaica African born slaves in 1763 outnumbered the Creole ones.

Statistics are hard to come by but even the unreliable ones give some idea of the proportion of locally born slaves to imported ones. In 1762 there were on the eleven estates belonging to the directors of the Company which governed Berbice about 1,061 slaves - the large majority of whom were Creoles, as both by circumstances and by policy the Berbice Company had stocked its plantations with Creoles. On the 84 odd estates belonging to private planters there were upwards of 2,622 slaves, almost all of whom had been imported into Berbice since 1732 when the colony acquired a new charter which encouraged private planters by giving them liberal grants of land. There were in fact more slaves on private estates than the number given suggests, as that count was based on the returns of the head tax on the slaves for 1762. But there were at least fifteen more plantations enjoying ten-year inducement exemption from the poll tax on which the average number of slaves would have been between 15 and 20. Of these all were likely to be imported Africans. Significantly the number of slaves on each of the company's plantations was far greater than on any of the private ones; on the former plantations the average number was 96 slaves; on the latter the average was between 25 and 30. This is not of mere statistical interest but as will be presently shown it helps to shed light on the difference of attitudes between the Creole and African slaves and bore important implications for the course of the rebellion.

The fact that there was a rebellion at all and its sustained nature stems partly from the high ratio of African slaves in Berbice. But more important it stems from their rejection of the system under which they lived. Or to put it more precisely their tolerance of the system was conditioned by the strength and confidence of the master class. If the latter two were not maintained the former disappeared.

The available evidence suggests not that the African slaves withdrew their acceptance of the system sometime in 1762 or 1763 but that they had never accepted the system all along. This is borne out by the attempts at slave revolts on individual plantations between 1730 and 1760. At the end of 1733 for instance on an estate in the Canje a serious rising of African slaves took place, two white overseers were murdered and the slaves fled to the bush to join the Surinam bush negroes. They were however caught by a detachment of

soldiers and the leaders broken on the wheel. In 1749 the majority of the slaves on Pln. Petershof revolted, severely manhandled the manager and tried to take over the plantation but were defeated in their attempt to do so by the slaves from the Company's plantation on the opposite bank of the Berbice River. These not only came to the assistance of the plantation authorities, but pursued and captured the runaway rebels and so restored order. Again in 1752 Pln. Switzerland experienced a revolt among the African slaves, but this was quelled by the Creole Negroes from Pln. de Peereboom with the assistance of the Accowai Indians stationed there.

In addition to these actual revolts some fourteen conspiracies in those years were recorded as having been discovered and nipped in the bud - the informants being variously Amerindians stationed on the plantations to watch the slaves; members of tribes not included in the conspiracies and therefore revealing their contents out of pique; or slave women living in concubinage with overseers whose sudden change of behaviour suggested that trouble was afoot.

But if acceptance of the system did not come easily to the African, the behaviour of the Creole slaves suggest the reverse. They not only appeared to have accepted the system but were even prepared to help enforce obedience to it on the Africans. The confidence which the masters displayed in sending Creole slaves into the bush to catch the rebels is a strong testimony of this. The differences in the ratio of whites and Amerindians to the Negroes on the Colonial as opposed to the private plantations also underlines the status quo attitude of the Creoles. In 1762 there were 216 whites and 240 Indians to the 2,622 odd slaves on the private estates and the ratio of whites to negroes was probably greater two years before that, the death rate of the whites in the dysentery epidemic (which was at its peak in 1759) being very high. By contrast on the colonial estates there were 40 Europeans and 30 Amerindians to 1,061 odd slaves. It means that on the private estates the ratio of those committed to upholding the system as against the potential rebels was one in five; whereas on the colonial estates the ratio of the protectors of the system to the slaves was roughly one in fifteen. The ratio of the whites was certainly greater on the company's estates before the epidemic began but it could not have been any thing like the ratio on the private estates, since we are told by Hoogenheim that the directors' policy was to employ a few white overseers as was consistent

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with the maintenance of order so as to cut down the expense of running these plantations. This was the logic behind the policy of purchasing Creole slaves to stock the estates. Order could be maintained without a large supervisory staff of whites; and also without large posses of Amerindians acting as policemen. At the end of 1762 a rumour was spread that the Negroes in the "Nigger Yard" near Fort Nassau were planning to takeover the Fort and begin a rebellion, but the rumour was more indicative of the fears of the white planters than the attitude of the slaves. There were nearly all Creoles and the Governor after a thorough investigation found them quiet and very loyal to the system. All this suggests that the crucial pre-conditions of slave rebellions are less the paucity of the master class and more the attitude of the slaves. The paucity of the whites only becomes important, it would seem, if it is coupled with other circumstances to produce a failure of nerve on their part.

If it is true that the lack of acceptance is a good seed bed for revolt, it is also true that this lack is most readily crystallised into active revolt by an increasing inefficiency or increasing rigour in the system. Just before the Berbice rebellion broke out the precarious dependence of the slaves on their masters on the private estates was brutally demonstrated. Slaves on the private estates had no provision grounds which might give them both a sense of security and a framework to express an otherwise dangerous initiative. On the other hand the slaves on the Company's plantations were provided with provision grounds and therefore with a sense of security which coupled with their socialisation in acceptance of slavery from birth made them amenable to their status. One reason for this was that the Company's plantations were larger than the private estates, their normal size being about 2000 acres whatever their crop while the private estates were granted 1,000 acres for sugar and 500 for coffee and cotton. There was another reason. Berbice went through a period of considerable prosperity in the 1750's. As had been noted elsewhere in the West Indies a period of prosperity usually meant land which might have been given over to the slaves was pressed into cultivation to catch the market. The Result was that the slave depended for his food on the efficiency of his master.

In Berbice whatever passed for efficiency in the distribution of supplies was seriously undermined by the dysentery epidemic which ravaged the colony between 1757 and 1762. Where it did not kill the white estate staff it seriously

affected their ability to perform their normal duties. The result was that the slaves received their rations in a desultory manner and when they attempted to take supplies on their own they were brutally punished. Some of the leaders of the rebellion were to declare later: "The causes of this war is that there are many masters who have not given the slaves their due". Another leader claimed that the revolution had taken place "because the Christians were rough to them (slaves)". The supply of provisions was clearly short in the latter half of 1762; it appears that ships were avoiding Berbice because of the news of the epidemic and the attempt to use part of the Canje as a fishing ground for slaves had not produced the expected results.

The resentment of the African slaves was therefore most acutely provoked at a time when the masters were most acutely weakened. And their sickness in turn evoked a total lack of confidence in their ability to face any concerted resistance from the slaves. This was not due purely to the epidemic. In part it was due to their own complacency and that of the directors of the Berbice Co. in the two decades before the 1760's. For the individual planters had taken few precautions to fortify their estates against slave resistance, and the Company had made no efforts to keep the fortifications of Fort Nassau in repair. Equally important neither planters nor the administrators in 1762 had confidence either in the efficiency or the loyalty of the soldiers. These, drawn from mercenaries of many nations had clearly suggested their disloyalty in 1751 by an attempt at desertion from Fort Nassau and were to confirm it by going over to the revolting slaves at a crucial stage of the rebellion. The upshot of all this was the conviction among the whites that rebellion among the slaves should not be met by resistance but by retreat, down to the coast if possible and out of Berbice if necessary. Nor did they hide this conviction - a characteristic which they shared with their brother planters throughout the Caribbean. As Governor Hoogenheim pointed out towards the end of 1762 "the misery that our plantations have suffered for a considerable time past has been so great, that, unless I had a mind to help them, your honours could not have believed what an evil impression this could have caused on the minds of the slaves and in our straightened circumstances to what worse results they might often have given rise"⁵

While the masters were confessing their own inability to resist, the

African slaves were measuring their own ability to rebel. In July 1762 a revolt broke out on two contiguous plantations, Goed Land and Goed Fortuin, belonging to the same owner about eighty miles up the Berbice River. Some thirty six slaves all Africans, forming a solid union, bound together by an oath, and comprising all the slaves on the two plantations took advantage of the absence of the owner at Fort Nassau and the presence of only one other white man, and broke open the storehouse for provisions and weapons. They filled corials with food and ammunition, attempted unsuccessfully to make allies of the negroes on the neighbouring plantation, sailed up the Berbice and put to flight the post of Accawai Indians who guarded the frontiers of the plantation belt. After some bitter fighting with the mercenaries sent to bring them back the majority of the runaways were ambushed and killed.

The significance of this revolt lay in the terror it inspired in the whites. Hoogenheim noted that they were plainly hysterical after it. They petitioned for regulars of the Dutch Army to be sent to Berbice and promised to pay for the employment of more whites on their plantations. The Governor was alarmed at the extent to which the whites allowed the slaves to gauge their fears and their feeling of impotence and vainly attempted to persuade them that in the circumstances "bluff was as important as battalions".

But there was another feature of importance: the leader of the revolt this time was a privileged slave - the master foreman, which suggests that the weakness of the whites was so patent that the privileged slaves who did best out of the system were now considering an alternative system in which they could do better and this was to be the pattern of the great rebellion the following year.

The rebellion when it broke out at Magdalenberg on the 23rd February 1763 appears to have been an attempt to create a bush negro situation rather than to take over the plantations. The rebels sized the ammunition, recruited allies from a neighbouring plantation and made off to the Corentyne river to join the Dujkas there.

What followed in the Berbice was different. There seems to have been a conspiracy among the slaves when a cluster of neighbouring estates about fourteen miles from Fort Nassau - for the rising on Pln. Juliana was followed

quickly by similar risings on Plns. Mon Repos, Essendam, Lillienburg, Elizabeth, Alexandra, Hollandia and Zeelandia. The timing of the conspiracy seems to have resulted from two stimuli: the news of the revolt on Pln. Magdalenberg and the news that the Accawai garrison was involved in a war with a hostile tribe and therefore could not act as a counterweight to the rebels.

Having sacked the logies and ransacked the storehouses on the coffee plantations the rebels settled down on two sugar estates, Hollandia and Zeelandia, which faced each other on opposite banks of the river and which therefore acted as flanks for each other. From these sites they intended to lock off upper Berbice and consolidate their position. It is evident from the pronouncements they made on Pln. Peereboom a little while afterwards that they intended not merely to change masters but to change the whole system and make the areas that they had conquered independent of the whites. When asked by one of the plantation managers why the negroes were treating the Christians so abominably, the rebels replied "That the Christians were rough to them, that they were not going to tolerate any more Christians or whites in their country and that they intended to be the masters of the Berbice, that all the plantations were theirs and that the Christians would have to transfer them over to them". The revolutionary implications in that statement suggests considerable confidence on the part of the rebels. And this was evoked by the corresponding loss of confidence among the whites, both of the planter class and also of the naval men and crews from the ships stationed in the river at that time. A group of whites fleeing from the rebels had collected on the plantation de Peereboom - the Company plantation just above the site of the negroes' stronghold. There were three ships in the river which if properly armed and deployed could have relieved Peereboom and destroyed the buildings used by the rebels on Plns. Hollandia and Zeelandia. But the skippers refused to proceed upstream, Peereboom was captured and, as the rebel leaders saw their revolutionary expectations vindicated, they began moving downstream to Fort Nassau whose fortifications were too ramshackle to permit of serious defence.

Fort Nassau was consequently abandoned and the Governor, the militia the mercenaries and the refugees made for de Dagoraad which in turn was also abandoned. The abandonment of the latter was not necessary but, the colonists

wished to escape out of Berbice and the skippers refused to use their ships to buttress the defence of an estate which was in little danger of rebel seizure as it was protected on three sides by impenetrable swamps. The movement of the whites reached the coast of St. Andries situated at the mouth of the Canje Creek and it was only the arrival of reinforcements from Suriname which made possible the Governor's move to retake Dageraad.

The factor which restored white confidence and therefore the white offensive was the arrival of ships and reinforcements from St. Eustatius, Surinam and Holland. By contrast in Demerara the planters showed no loss of nerve in dealing with clear signs of restlessness among their African slaves. With their confidence buttressed by their Barbadian connections, (and some of the planters in Demerara had estates in both Barbados and Guyana), the British planters commissioned two armed brigantines to sail for the Demerara River whose presense quickly quietened down the slaves.

The factors which restrained the rebels from driving the whites out of Berbice before the reinforcements arrived were the power struggles among the leaders of the revolt and the ethnic divisions among the slaves themselves. Both these factors must be considered in attempting to explore the anatomy of slave revolts in the 18th century. But there is a third factor to be considered as well - what position did the leaders of the rebellion hold on the estates before 1763? Kofi, Accabre, Atta, Gousari, and Accra were all slaves with positions of authority or with special skills on their respective plantations. Kofi was a copper, having formerly been a house-slave and Atta was a "bomba" or master-foreman. Accabu, Accra and Goussari were Carpenters. Clearly the severity of the system bore less heavily on them than on the field-slaves whose living were regulated by a dull monolony. But it seems equally certain that their privileged positions confirmed in them ambitions which the system could not satisfy; and shaped the confidence to create an alternative system under their own control. Nor is this position materially different from that of the leaders of subsequent revolts against Colonial Power. There have usually been men of special education or some privilege within the system which they set about to overthrow. This brings us back to the thesis of acceptance and rejection: the special position of these slaves did not induce

acceptance but rather equipped them with skills to make their rejection effective.

But if their rejection of the system was unanimous, their construction of an acceptable hierarchy proved difficult. In the early stages of the rebellion Kofi, and Akan, emerged as supreme commander of the rebels and "Governor of Berbice", and from Fort Nassau where he had set up his headquarters he wrote his famous letters of negotiation to Governor Van Hoogenheim. He operated on two principles (after an initial demand for the whole of Berbice): the first was a division of Berbice into two regions - upper Berbice independent, free from Slavery and ruled by blacks, and lower Berbice, colonial, slave holding and ruled by whites. The second principle was a loose federation of the African tribal groupings with each group occupying clearly defined areas or villages - though what he intended for the Creoles is not quite clear. Over this federation he expected to exercise a general supervision as head of State. In April 1763 Kofi dispatched emissaries to Bush Negro leaders in Surinam with requests for assistance against the white and proposals for what in modern parlance we would call pacts of mutual assistance in the future.

Behind his first principle lay the practical consideration that the attempt to drive the Dutch completely out of Berbice would mean abandoning the production of food to the pursuit of victory. Already in May 1763 there were signs that food was running short. Many of the rebels objected to Kofi's orders to work on the provision grounds of the Company's estates and clear land for provision grounds on the private ones. He therefore forced the Creoles into growing but their reluctant labour produced too little for the rival forces.

Behind the second principle lay Kofi's sensitivity to the tribal loyalties and pride of the Africans. It seems that the structure of statehood he envisaged was meant to be strong enough to ensure the safety and defence of upper Berbice, but not so strong as to bruise tribal identities.

In both strategies Kofi was opposed by Atta - another Akan leader. Atta wanted Berbice completely cleared of the whites. He also was less sensitive to ethnic identities. Because Kofi had begun to organise for peace, and because of a rift between himself and Acre, his chief lieutenant, Atta was able to overthrow him. Kofi committed suicide in traditional Akan fashion and many of his followers were killed in the struggle.

Once Atta became War-lord the rebellion began to fragment. The majority of Bantu speaking Africans hive off and began to fight their own war against the white counter offensive, Garbled accounts suggest that the Akans under Atta were attempting to dominate the other Africans:

"The Delmina slaves played master, having either murdered the Angola slaves or hunted them into the bush and having forced the Creoles into their service". Such was the resentment at Atta's peculiar Akan dominance that Accara and Goussari offered theri services to the Dutch to bring him in and fulfilled their offer.

The behaviour of the Creoles slaves during the rebellion emphasises the differences in their attitude to the system of slavery an well as the divisions in the ranks of the rebels. In the early stages of the revolt they generally remained loyal to their masters only to be abandoned by them in the retreat to the West. They were thus forced by threats from the rebels to play a reluctant role in the rebellion as the alternative was very short. Because their commitment to the rebellion was always in doubt, they were given no positions of authority which exacerbated their resentment against the rebel leaders and ensured that as soon as the white showed sign, of taking the offensive they would return to their side. On top of all this they were outraged at being put to grow food for the rebels and at one point some of them hatched a conspiracy against Kofi's life.

The colonial slaves played a role the exact opposite to that of the readers of the revolt. Their privileged positions on the Company estates did not lead them into rebellion but rather turned them into loyalists to the prevailing order. But their acceptance of the system may have been based on their special expectations. Mulatto slaves in Berbice were usually manumitted after periods of loyal service rather than at birth. Hence it was to their advantage to demonstrate their l yalty to the system in order to escape it. But this meant that they devoted their services to strengthening the hold of the system on those who had no legal form of excaping it. At the end of the rebellion some 83 colonial slaves were given their freedom for loyal services.

Sixty years after the 1763 Rebellion another inportant protest against the system took place this time in Demerara in 1823. But the differences

between the two rebellions are certainly impressive. In 1763 the slaves were fighting for the independence of a part of Berbice and the right to rule themselves. In 1823 the arms of the slaves were more conservative and even confused. They demanded their "rights" which they believed the King of England had granted to them but which the King's local Representative had refused. But some interpreted these "rights" as total freedom; others as involving merely more time to farm their provision grounds, others again as more pay for Sunday labour and the freedom to go chapel without a pass.

Significantly in 1823, unlike in 1763, Creole and African born slaves cooperated in the resistance to the authorities and some of the Creoles like Jack Gladstone, Jackey Reid and Telemachus Spearheaded the movement.

This raises two fundamental questions. Why did the slaves seek a less radical approach to changing the slave system than in 1763? and how were the Creoles, who in 1763 were hostile to the rebellion, converted into leading critics of the system?

In answering the first question it is important to notice that the metropolitan power in Guyana early in 19th century was far stronger than the Dutch had been in the 18th century. British Navel control of the Caribbean was at its acme in the years immediately after the Napoleonic wars, and the planters in Guyana and else where depended on the navy as the ultimate sanction of the system. Secondly there were more troops garrisoning the Guyana Colonies in the years after 1815 than had existed in Berbice in 1763. Some of these troops had fought in the Napoleonic Wars and were distributed throughout the Empire to keep the peace. Some were members of the West India Regiment, the rank and file of whom were Africans more capable of resisting attacks of yellow fever than British Soldiers proved to be. The technical efficiency of their troops was immense and their loyalty was undoubted.

But although the Metropolitan power had grown stronger in the colonies, the conviction that slavery could best be left to the New-comers had grown weaker. Slavery had become a debatable institution and those who argued against its right to exist had succeeded in 1807 in getting the Slave Trade abolished, and in 1815 a Bill had been introduced into Parliament to establish

a Registry of all slaves in the slave Colonies.

These events and currents made the slaves feel that the initiative against the system was being made in England. The system was no longer inviolate since if internal overthrow seemed less possible external amelioration was distinctly feasible. The protest of 1823 was essentially an attempt to bring changes into operation by non-violent pressure - changes which the slaves supposed had already been sanctioned from above, but this merely raises the more profound question: How is it that men born into slavery and socialised to accept it as inevitable found themselves responding willingly to every wind of change blowing against the system? What changes in other words the psychology of acceptance into a psychology of criticism?

The answer to that question seems to lie in the work of the missionaries among the slaves. The process of socialisation for the slaves born on the plantations was geared to establishing a personality which accepted its own lack of worth and attach an exaggerated value to the whites. Once the slave believed in his own inferiority it was assumed he would accept as of right the position of the master and his own servile and uncontrolled status in the system. Changing this personality structure to believe in its own worth vis-a-vis the planters involved a traumatic experience - and this was usually provided by the experience called "conversion" which the missionaries both of the London Missionary Society and The Methodist Missionary Society (and in Jamaica The Baptist) specialised in evoking. Planters sensed this danger and they condemned the "enthusiasm" of the sectaries as being dangerous to public order. The Missionaries claimed that they came to make the slaves more obedient to their masters and it seems well established that this was their honest intention. But the kind of "Enthusiasm" they encouraged made a slave believe he was a new man, a regenerate creature, and therefore worthwhile in his own eyes. John Smith around whose missionary chapel so much controversy centred during the rebellion refers in his diary constantly to the negro slaves saying what miserable sinners they were and how very much they wanted to be changed. And it seems that their sense of sin was rather a sense of social worthlessness or inferiority than the concept of personal depravity in which the missionaries believed. Services in slave chapels usually followed the pattern of people weeping for their sins, people crying out loudly for their guilt, and then coming away refreshed by a new confidence,

almost a new personality, but no longer feeling the peculiar mixture of guilt and unworthiness which characterised the typical Creole slave. Even if the experience of conversion was not followed by baptism or a particularly close adherence to the church the effect seems to have been to change the Creole slave not necessarily into an outwardly less obedient slave but inwardly into a less accepting one.

But it was not the experience of conversion alone which reoriented the Creole slave. Coupled with it was the process of acculturation which the chapel fostered and which sustained the conversion experience. And the slave who acquired a new sense of worth was usually the slave who wished to become literate. It is significant that some of the leaders of the East Coast Slave Revolt communicated with each other in writing clearly to avoid the suspicion of often being seen together which was clearly the result of their attendance at the missionary chapel and the missionary chapel school. But literacy had other uses as well. Apart from fostering a closer acculturation to the standards of the master it allowed for a wider knowledge of what was going on in the master's world. And since attacks on the slave system in England were usually registered faithfully in the local press and in the papers regularly sent to the colonies literacy was a useful entree into this controversy and consequently stimulated the slave's desire to see himself in a new light.

For privileged and skilled slaves the missionary provided relief from what appears to have been an acute psychological dilemma. The system of slavery gave these slaves the privileges of position without the security of personal self-esteem. Their position depended too much on the master and was therefore peculiarly precarious. Hence they oscillated between obeisance and ostentation, as most observers pointed out, and habitually used their authority with neurotic caprice and even brutality on the less privileged slaves. These were usually the slaves who underwent the most traumatic conversion experiences, changing from severe taskmasters into fervent teachers and asserting a religious authority over their fellow slaves in place of the authority of coercion. As one planter sourly reported about a privileged slave of his "having becoming Christian the fellow is not satisfied with being religious himself but stays up at night to preach to others". Having resolved the conflict between their position and through out, the missionary chapels

often provided these privileged slaves with structures of leadership in the system of elders, deacons, class leaders, bible readers, etc. which gave them a securer base of authority than the plantation system and therefore made it possible for them to be more critical of the system itself. For instance both Quamina and Telenachus who were deeply implicated in the East Coast affair were skilled slaves and both were men of authority in Smith's chapel, Quamina being a deacon and Telenachus being a class leader.

It seems fair to say that by the beginning of the 1820's on the East Coast of Demerara the "premise of inequality" was becoming increasingly unacceptable to those slaves who were attending Smith's Chapel and therefore that one of the pre-conditions of the Berbice Slave Rebellion was also becoming operative in Demerara. There is another underlying similarity as well. As I mentioned earlier the slaves were suffering from special privations just before the Berbice Slave Insurrection began which by pinpointing their insecurity sharpened their rejection of the system and evoked a co-ordinated assault upon it. Similarly by 1823 a change had been taking place on the estates of the East Coast of Demerara which had the effect of increasing the rigours of the system at a time when acceptance was declining, that is the change over on many estates from cotton to sugar.

As Guianese cotton succumbed to competition from American cotton after 1815, planters with capital or credit began to turn their cotton estates into sugar ones. The cotton picking season usually lasted three months a year and although the slaves were worked very hard at this time their slack period was a long one. But the crop season for sugar varied between six and eight months a year in Guyana and both the cane cutting and factory work were more laborious and unpleasant than the work on a cotton plantation. And as the slaves expressed their distaste at this change the management tended to increase its sanctions. It is interesting to note that Plns. Success, Le Resouvenir, Batchelor's Adventure, Lusignan, Annandale, Enmore, Mon Repos, all the estates from which the rebels were principally drawn, were cotton estates recently turned into sugar. As one writer put it referring to Gladstone's Success "ever since it has been put in sugar, the negroes complained of hard and late work". Corollary with the change from cotton to sugar was the movement of slaves from one area to another. For instance, some of the slaves involved in

the East Coast, Demerara, affair had been moved thither in the years between 1818 and 1820 from the Corentyne. This tended to make them insecure. Slaves became very attached to their provision grounds and the places where they buried their relatives and their friends and most important of all the places where they buried their savings. But perhaps most crucial of all was the fact that some of the cotton estates on the East Coast of Demerara were turned into cattle farms and the slaves on them were to be sold. The selling of slaves and division of gangs and companies at a time when numbers of the slaves were finding the system increasingly unacceptable brought a breaking point. It is significant that Telechanus one of the most important leaders of the rebellion, and the man who disciplined the other slaves by preventing them from pillaging the estate wine cellars their self-control himself up for sale before the rebellion and was assiduously seeking a buyer in the neighbourhood of his old plantation.

There is one other similarity with the pre-conditions of the Berbice Slave Insurrection. In Berbice the planters just before the rebellion suffered from a loss of nerve. In Demerara the planters just before the outbreak of the East Coast affair suffered from a lack of decision. This was the response to the Order in Council from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, on May 28, 1823, prohibiting the flogging of slave women, the use of the whip by the slave drivers and limiting the working hours of slaves to nine per day. The Governor finding the order objectionable refused to publish it. The planters finding the order objectionable refused to keep silent about it. Constitutionally they could not reject it; but as a class they were averse to enforcing it. It was discussed therefore with exaggerated apprehension in planters' houses, in shops, in the streets, and of course inevitably in the slave huts as well. The planters tended to see this order as a thin edge of the wedge and as they discussed the prospect of a possible emancipation, so the idea arose among the slaves that the king had granted their freedom. Hence with a sense of legitimate power vis-a-vis the planter class, a structure was formed among the slaves using the organisation of Smith's Chapel as its base and its channel of communication but without using the assistance of the minister.

But here the resemblance with the Berbice Slave Insurrection ends.

For the East Coast rebels attempted to use no violent methods of protest,

securing the whites as hostages for the granting of their "rights" while they themselves went on strike. Their non-violent approach was symbolised by their plan of action. For estate gangs were not allowed to put their own overseers and managers in stocks but were made to put the managers and overseers of the neighbouring plantations in the stocks an attempt to prevent retaliatory personal attacks. Equally different from the Berbice Slave Insurrection was the fact that the planter class did not lose its nerve the moment the strike became clear but replied to non-violent demands for freedom and amelioration with bullets - which forced the negroes to retaliate and many were shot down with efficient brutality. Significantly after the rebellion the planters had John Smith condemned to death for conspiracy and sedition. But the real reason for his court martial was that his Chapel had provided a stimulus for the questioning of the principle of acceptance. It is interesting that after the rebellion the legislature of Demerary and Essequibo voted considerable sums for the establishment of the Anglican and Presbyterian churches - churches which did not indulge in "enthusiasm" and which therefore it was safely assumed would not endow the negroes who came under their care with a sense of worth damaging to the system of slavery. But this proved too little and too late. Two things emerge from the consideration of these two slave revolts. The first is that in a society based on the premise of inequality the masters must possess sufficient confidence and force to maintain their hold over those who reject the premise or there must be groups within the society who accept the premise of inequality to act as a make-weight against those who do not. And the case of the Berbice Slave Insurrection shows that the Creole slaves as long as the masters confidence remained invulnerable acted as a counter weight to the African born slaves and thus maintained a balance within the society. When however the master's confidence was destroyed acceptance of the system by the Creole slaves was of little avail since they developed leadership and therefore undeveloped in strategy against the Africans who attempted to overthrow the system. The second consideration arising out of an analysis of the East Coast 1823 revolt is that wither a traumatic experience or an alternative form of organisation to the one which they accept must be available for those who accept a system of inequality to become critics of it. It seems that we have not yet paid

sufficient attention to this change of attitude on the part of the Creole
slaves and that therefore a great deal more research on this particular
aspect needs to be done.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Selections from the Diary kept by Governor Van Hoogenheim February 1763 - June 1764.

Selections from the Proceedings of the trial of rebellious slaves. The Berbice Court of Justice. February 1764 - April 1764.

These selections were translated at the Royal Archives the Hague Holland, at the authors request in October 1970. A complete translation of both documents has been commissioned but has not yet been completed.

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1. The first part of the report is devoted to a general survey of the situation in the country.

2. The second part of the report is devoted to a detailed examination of the various branches of the economy.

3. The third part of the report is devoted to a study of the social and cultural conditions of the country.

4. The fourth part of the report is devoted to a study of the political and administrative organization of the country.

5. The fifth part of the report is devoted to a study of the foreign relations of the country.

6. The sixth part of the report is devoted to a study of the military and naval forces of the country.

7. The seventh part of the report is devoted to a study of the scientific and technological progress of the country.